

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Title

Mobile Evidence Control Unit
Property Retrieval Procedures

Series / Number

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

1. PURPOSE:

To streamline the method in which property is transferred from the field units to the Evidence Control Unit, standards of care are defined and handling procedures are set forth. These standards and procedures establish a methodology that ensures efficiency while maintaining systematic security and integrity of all items in custody of the Department. This plan will be effective immediately.

2. SCOPE:

This policy applies to the receipt of any/all property by any member of the Evidence Control Unit. All members assigned to Evidence Control and Equipment & Supplies shall familiarize themselves with the contents of the procedures set forth and comply with them at all times.

3. DEFINITIONS:

These definitions shall be used as a general guide. Common sense and operating in good faith with a view towards efficiency and integrity shall prevail. In the event that a member has any question or doubt about an event or item, and a clear understanding is not possible, then an ECD official shall be consulted and the final decision made by them strictly adhered to.

- Manifest- Any list, tabulation, routing, or description of items expected to be retrieved, or actually retrieved, by members of teams; whether created at the ECD or the originating element by any means.
- Discrepancy- Any item, description, faulty form, or missing or incorrect information that would inhibit the ability to effectively process any item, or raise reasonable doubt as to the integrity of any ECD member or the Evidence Control Division as a whole. These should be considered serious, uncorrectable, and unusual

circumstances. It is expected that, under most circumstances, the team members, in conjunction with the element property officer, most errors and minor variations can and will be corrected during the pick-up review process.

4. PROCEDURES:

- A. Preparation: Prior to departing for the element(s) scheduled for pick-up, each team shall prepare ahead of time in every reasonable manner so as to minimize any chance for circumstances that would compromise the efficiency and integrity of the process. These preparations are inclusive of, but not limited to, the following procedures.
- Print a list of property items held at the element. This list shall be considered the **Pick-up Manifest**.
 - The team shall then contact the property officer of the element(s) to notify them of the imminent property pick-up and the number of items expected to be ready. Any items not ready for pick-up shall be received from the unit property officer and noted on the pick-up manifest. An ECD official shall be notified for follow-up.
 - Obtain all equipment necessary for receiving, securing, and transporting items of evidence. If necessary equipment is unavailable, thereby preventing the property from being picked up, then an official of ECD shall be notified so that arrangements for obtaining the equipment and property can be made.
 - Use all information at hand in order to take reasonable steps to prepare and adjust for the property pick-up, with a direct view towards promoting efficiency and integrity.
- B. Arrival at the element: Upon arrival at the element scheduled for pick-up, each team shall ensure that the vehicle is parked in a secure location and one that will not require returning to the vehicle or other interruptions during the pick-up process.
- Each team shall respond to the element property office together and review the intake sheet prepared by the element property officer for completeness. No team member shall depart company from the other team member during the review process except under exigent circumstances. Any departure or separation shall be noted on the Pick-up Manifest with the reason(s).
 - Advise the element property officer to remain in the property office at all times during the property pick-up.
 - All items should be prepared in an orderly fashion by the element property officer prior to the arrival of the team. If the items are not prepared in an orderly fashion, then it shall be noted by the team

and review of the items will continue with the property officer finding and displaying items to the team as there are requested.

- All items shall be inspected for completeness, security of packaging, discrepancies, necessary forms, and legitimate descriptions. (Example: an item described as a greenish weed-like substance, but is actually white rocks is unacceptable; an item described as a greenish weed-like substance, but appears to be brownish would be acceptable) Common sense should prevail during this process. All envelopes, bags, heat seals, etc. must be sealed and properly marked before they are accepted.
- Any item that appears unacceptable shall be returned to the property officer for immediate correction.
If they cannot be immediately corrected then it shall be noted on the manifests along with an estimated date of readiness given by the property officer.
- If at any time, it is determined that the property officer at the originating element is severely unprepared, uncooperative, or that the property to be picked up is in serious question, an official of ECD shall be immediately contacted and a decision as to whether to leave the property shall be made.

C. Processing at the warehouse: Team members shall ensure that all items of property are secure, and maintain possession over them until they are placed in proper shelving/filing locations.

- Upon arrival at the warehouse, team members shall immediately unload the property and respond to the warehousing area. Items shall be placed in proper shelving/filing locations and the locations noted on the manifests at that time. At no time shall property items be left unattended or in undetermined locations awaiting proper placement.
- Team members shall then respond to available computer terminals and begin the transfer of property from the originating element to the warehouse. All errors and missing information on any single item shall be rectified prior to processing the next item. If the team cannot rectify an item, then an official shall be notified and shall attempt to rectify the error. If the error in the computer cannot be rectified due to reasons caused by the originating element, then the property officer shall be contacted by phone in an attempt to rectify the error. Only after every reasonable effort has been made to correct the error(s) shall the item be warehoused and a letter shall be forwarded to the originating element for correction with a return date of seven (7) days.
- Upon completion of the transferring of property, both physically and electronically, all PD 81s and manifests shall be turned in to the ECD office for filing.

5. SUPERVISORS

A. Supervisors:

- 1) ECD supervisors shall make every attempt to assist and rectify problems with the property and/or property pick-up process as soon as possible.
- 2) Element officials shall be notified in the event of a substantial problem, or if resolving the discrepancy will be more effectively handled by that unit's officials. If a discrepancy letter is sent to an outside element, the warehouse official shall be responsible for tracking the outcome.
- 3) In the event that a unit level property office is not ready for a property pick-up, or if the unit level office is experiencing problems preparing property for retrieval, an ECD official shall contact the member(s) of that office to ascertain the problem and assist in reaching a solution.

D. Ride and review program

- 1) ECD sergeants shall, on a monthly basis ride with a property pick-up team to observe the property pick-up process for efficiency, integrity, and overall effectiveness. This review shall occur each month, during the week of the day that the sergeant is born (Example: Sgt. Lafalot is born on July 4. Every month during the week of the 4th, Sgt. Lafalot picks a different team to ride with and observe).
- 2) An after-action report shall be submitted through channels, to the manager of ECD, noting all discrepancies, problems and suggestions for overall improvement. If the sergeant is not available during the assigned week, then an alternate day as soon as practical will be chosen.
- 3) ECD lieutenant(s) and captain(s) shall perform the same ride and review function on a bi-yearly basis.

Our self-review and improvement of services is an on-going process, and this step is a major part of maintaining outstanding performance.


Keith L. Williams
Captain/Manager

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